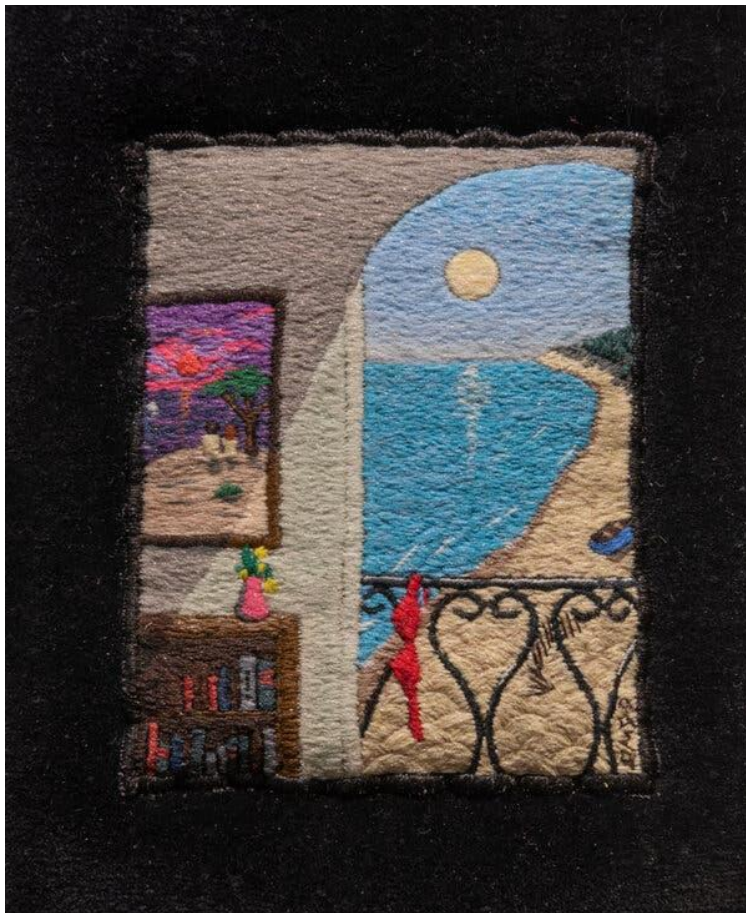


The New York Times

What to See in N.Y.C. Galleries in March

Want to see new art in the city? Check out Karen Kilimnik whimsical paintings or Ray Materson's astonishing embroideries.



Ray Materson's "Sunrise Sunset" (1999) in his show "Embroideries" at Andrew Edlin Gallery. via Andrew Edlin Gallery, New York and The William Louis-Dreyfus Foundation

Ray Materson's embroideries are astonishing for their size and intricacy: detailed images rendered in rectangles that never measure more than 5 1/4 inches on either side. One of the smallest pieces in his current exhibition is titled "Sunrise Sunset" (1999) and depicts a room bifurcated by a doorway leading to a balcony and beach beyond. A red bra hangs on the railing, and the sun setting over the water outside complements a

framed image inside of a couple watching a colorful sunrise. Materson fits all this and more into an area that's only 2 by 2 ¾ inches.

The artist got his start in prison, where he was serving time for robberies committed while addicted to drugs. Thinking of his grandmother, who sewed, he fashioned a makeshift embroidery hoop out of a plastic bowl lid and unraveled a pair of socks for thread; a guard gave him a needle. That was in 1988. Materson has since gotten clean and left prison, and he has continued embroidering. He's shown his work in galleries and museums, some of which have collected it, too (like the American Folk Art Museum). Sock threads are still his preferred material.

The works here cover the three-plus decades of his career. They range from personal pieces, like a depiction of his father, to sentimental portraits of cultural icons, and from charged political statements to campier or more surreal images like "Invasion" (2022), a sci-fi scene with aliens. Whatever the subject, the embroideries are evocative. Materson's deft compositions and meticulous stitching give his works a richness that lingers after the novelty of their making has faded away. *JILLIAN STEINHAUER*